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Central Intelligence Agency



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IRAN-IRAQ MILITARY SITUATION REPORT #19
(As of 1200 EST, 28 March 1984)

Iraqi Attack in the Gulf

Reports [] in Kuwait indicate that a South Korean ship leased to ARAMCO and used to service offshore oil rigs was hit and seriously damaged in yesterday's Iraqi attack. [] as many as 20 people may have been killed. [] a Greek tanker also was hit about 110 kilometers south of Khark Island in the same attack. Information from AWACs aircraft monitoring the situation in the Gulf indicated that two Iraqi aircraft flying at an altitude of 500 feet were in the area around this time. No crewmen were killed on the Greek tanker and the ship was only slightly damaged, but it is leaking some oil which it had taken on in Kuwait the previous day. []

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Comment: The Iraqis appear to be trying to implement a strategy of incremental pressure by increasing the frequency of raids and their area of operation in the Gulf. This is the first time Iraq has publicly claimed it has used Super Etendard fighter aircraft in the Gulf, indicating Baghdad may be trying to add more credibility to its threats to attack shipping. We cannot confirm that Super Etendard aircraft were used in the Iraqi attack but tend to believe Baghdad's assertion that those aircraft were used. []

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The latest raid was near the edge of the exclusion zone proclaimed by Iraq earlier in the war and well beyond the range of any Iranian surface-to-air missile sites and too far away for Iranian fighter aircraft to intercept the attackers easily. At the same time, however, by attacking at some distance from Khark the Iraqis risk hitting shipping not bound for Iran as happened Tuesday. []

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The Saudis--who own ARAMCO--will be angry and dismayed that the Iraqis hit their ship. Baghdad presumably will apologize privately to Riyadh for the

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error and the Saudis are unlikely to take any retaliatory steps such as suspending financial aid to Iraq. [REDACTED]

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Oil Market Reaction

[REDACTED] Exxon has temporarily forbidden its ships to enter the Gulf. Market reaction will depend on whether other major oil shippers follow suit. There was little apparent market reaction to the initial reports of yesterday's attack, because the information appeared too late in the day to significantly affect trading and because most industry analysts and traders who were aware of the incident appeared to be heavily discounting its importance. Initial industry reaction to the reports appeared to be influenced most by the fact that similar reports of a month ago proved unfounded. [REDACTED]

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